

## Message Text

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11

ACTION ARA-17

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12

AID-20 OPR-02 PC-04 RSR-01 /109 W  
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R 241603 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7613

INFO USCINCSO

AMCONSULATE CALI

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UNCLAS BOGOTA 4259

E. O. 811652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, CO

SUBJECT: GUERRILLAS INVADE TOWN IN HUILA PROVINCE

USCINCSO FOR POLAD J-2.

SUMMARY THE LOCAL PRESS OF MAY 23 REPORTED THAT ON TUESDAY MAY 22, A BAND OF FROM 70 TO 100 MEMBERS OF THE MOSCOW LINING REVOLUTIONARY ARMED FORCES OF COLOMBIA, (FARC) ATTACKED AND OCCUPIED COLOMBIA, A SMALL TOWN IN NORTHEASTERN HUILA. THE ATTACKERS OVERWHELMED THE SMALL POLICE DETACHMENT, WOUNDING THREE POLICE AND MEN SACKED THE TOWN. THEY ESCAPED IN TWO COMMANDEERED BUSES WITH MONEY, FOOD, CLOTHING, MEDICAL SUPPLIES AND WEAPONS CAPTURED FROM THE POLICE. MILITARY FORCES ARE ATTEMPTING TO REESTABLISH CONTACT WITH THE ATTACKERS. END SUMMARY

1. THE PRESS OF MAY 23 CARRIED EXTENSIVE COVERAGE OF THE INVASION AND TEMPORARY OCCUPATION EARLY TUESDAY, MAY 22, OF THE TOWN OF COLOMBIA ( APPROXIMATELY 70 KM NNE OF NEIVA NORTHEASTERN HUILA) BY APPROXIMATELY 100 MEMBERS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY ARMED FORCES OF COLOMBIA ( FARC)

2. ALTHOUGH THE VARIOUS PRESS AND OFFICIAL STATEMENTS DIFFER  
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SOMEWHAT IN THEIR REPORTING OF THE INCIDENT, THE GENERAL OUTLINES OF THE ATTACK ARE AS FOLLOWS. THE GROUP OF FROM 70 TO 100 MEMBERS OF THE FARC BEGAN ITS ATTACK ON THE POLICE BARRACKS IN COLOMBIA AT APPROXIMATELY 0430 ON MAY 22. FOLLOWING THE EXPENDITURE OF ALL THEIR AMMUNITION, THE SMALL POLICE DETACHMENT ( TOTALING 11 MEN, ALTHOUGH SOME WERE NOT AT THE STATION) WHICH HAD UNTIL THAT TIME PUT UP A REPORTEDLY SPIRITED DEFENSE, CAPITULATED AT APPROXIMATELY 0800.

3. THE INVADERS PROCEEDED TO LOOT STORES IN THE TOWN SEIZING MONEY, FOOD, CLOTHING AND MEDICAL SUPPLIES. THEY DESTROYED ALL COMMUNICATION LINKS WITH THE OUTSIDE INCLUDING THE LOCAL TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPHIC OFFICE. THE ATTACKERS ATTEMPTED UNSUCCESSFULLY TO BREACK INTO THE SAFE IN THE NATIONAL AGRARIAN FUND BUILDING.

4. THREE POLICEMEN INCLUDING THE COMMANDING OFFICER OF THE DETACHMENT WERE WOUNDED, BUT NO CIVILIANS WERE HURT. ALTHOUGH THE ATTACKERS THREATENED TO KILL ALL THE POLICEMEN THEY HAD CAPTURED, THEY DID NOT CARRY OUT THE THREAT.

5. WHILE THERE IS NO CERTAINTY AS TO THE IDENTITY OF THE LEADER OF THE ATTACKERS, VARIOUS LOCAL NEWSPAPERS DESCRIBE HIM AS JOSELO, SECOND- IN- COMAND OF THE FARC. RADIO TODELAR REPORTED THAT THE LEADER WAS FARC CHIEF PEDRO ANTONIO MARIN ALIAS TIROFIJO. EL ESPECTADOR, LIBERAL DAILY, DESCRIBES THE ATTACKERS AS BELONGING TO THE " ISAIAS PARDO" GROUP OF THE F KC.

6. AT APPROXIMATELY 0930, THE ATTACKERS FLED TOWARD LA URIBE, IN THE DEPARTMENT OF META IN TWO COMANDEERED BUSES. MILITARY FORCES INCLUDING AIRCRAFT ARE ATTEMPTING TO REESTABLISH CONTACT WITH THE GROUP.

7. COMMENT: THE COLOMBIA RAID APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN ONE OF THE FARC' S PERIODIC SALLIES TO RESTOCK ITS TREASURE CHEST, LARDER AND MEDICINE KIT, PROVIDE REALISTIC TRAINING AND MAINTAIN THE APPEARANCE OF REVOLUTIONARY ACITISM. A RESPONSE BY MILITARY FORCES WAS DELAYED BECAUSE OF THE COMMUNICATIONS BLACKOUT, BUT WHEN THE COMMANDER OF THE 9 TH BRIGADE WAS INFORMED, HE IMMEDIATELY DISPATCHED TROOPS WHO ARRIVED ONLY A HALF HOUR AFTER  
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THE FARC' S DEPARTURE. RADIS OF THIS NATURE ACHIEVE EXTENSIVE PUBLICITY FOR THE FARC AND ALLOW IT TO SEIZE LARGE QUANTITIES OF EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES BUT ALWAYS AT THE RISK OF CONTACT WITH SUPERIOR MILITARY FORCES. COLOMBIA, HUILA IS WITHIN WHAT ARE CONSIDERED TO BE THE FARC AREAS OF OPERATION.  
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